

In the Claims

Please cancel claims 1-16, 22, and 24-29.

17. (Currently Amended) ~~The invention of claim 1 wherein the~~ A process for marking an article by applying thereto a taggant, a marking formulation comprising a taggant, or an article marked with a taggant, wherein the taggant comprises a plurality of microparticles having two or more distinguishable marker layers corresponding to a predetermined numeric code comprises comprising date information,
the invention characterized in that:

the plurality of particles comprises a plurality of microparticle sets of at least one microparticle,
each microparticle set is characterized by a specific marker layer combination different from each other microparticle set, and
the combination of microparticle sets employed in said taggant collectively forms said numeric code comprising said date information.

18. (Original) The invention of claim 17 wherein each marker layer combination has three layers.

19. (Original) The invention of claim 18 wherein said numeric code includes one said marker layer combination coded to indicate a year.

20. (Original) The invention of claim 19 wherein said numeric code further includes two said marker layer combinations coded to indicate a day within said year.

21. (Original) The invention of claim 19 wherein said numeric code further includes a second said marker layer combination coded to indicate a month within said year and a third said marker layer combination coded to indicate a day within said month.